

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----011254Z 005257 /41

P R 011222Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7078
INFO USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 05777

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PGOV WB US UK FR GW GE UR
SUBJECT: ALLIED REACTIONS TO RECENT GDR ACTIONS
AFFECTING BERLIN

REFS: (A) STATE 67315; (B) BONN 5068; (C) PARIS 9087;
(D) BERLIN 5594

BEGIN SUMMARY. THE BRITISH APPEAR NOT TO SHARE THE
US AND FRENCH VIEWS ON THE UTILITY OF TAKING CERTAIN
STEPS IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE GDR TO
INDICATE THE SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH WE VIEW RECENT
GDR ACTIONS AFFECTING BERLIN. LONDON SEEMS TO FEEL
THAT IT IS UP TO THE FRG, BY USE OF ITS ECONOMIC
LEVERAGE, TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM, AND MEANWHILE
ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE VISIT TO EAST BERLIN BY LORD GORONWY-

ROBERTS, A JUNIOR MINISTER IN THE FCO, IS PLANNED FOR
APRIL 5. ANY US ATTEMPT TO PERSUADE THE BRITISH TO
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POSTPONE THE VISIT WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE, IN OUR VIEW,
AT A HIGH LEVEL. END SUMMARY.

1. HOW THE ALLIES SHOULD PROCEED IN THEIR RELATIONS
WITH THE GDR, IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT GDR ACTIONS
AFFECTING BERLIN, WAS AGAIN DISCUSSED IN A TRIPARTITE
MEETING ON MARCH 31. THE US REP DREW FROM REF (A) TO

PRESENT TO THE FRENCH AND UK BONN GROUP REPS THE DEPARTMENT'S REACTION TO THE SUGGESTION PREVIOUSLY MADE BY THE FRENCH REP THAT WE SHOULD CONSIDER A "FREEZE" IN BILATERAL POLITICAL RELATIONS WITH THE GDR.

2. UK REP (EYERS) ALSO GAVE REACTIONS TO THE FRENCH SUGGESTION. HE SAID HE AGREED WITH THE US VIEW -- ALTHOUGH HE RECOGNIZED THAT IT WAS NOT THE MAIN THRUST OF THE US PRESENTATION -- THAT A FREEZE ON RELATIONS WITH THE GDR WAS NOT IN THE WESTERN INTEREST. EYERS CONTINUED THAT THE QUESTION HAD RECENTLY BEEN DISCUSSED BILATERALLY BETWEEN FCO DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY HIBBERT AND FRENCH POLITICAL DIRECTOR DE LABOULAYE. THEY HAD AGREED THAT WHAT REALLY MATTERED WAS THE OVERALL RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIETS AND THAT HERE THE US CARRIED A LARGE PORTION OF THE BURDEN FOR THE WHOLE ALLIANCE. THE OTHER AREA WHERE EFFECTIVE PRESSURES COULD BE BROUGHT TO BEAR ON THE GDR WAS IN THE FIELD OF INNER-GERMAN TRADE WITH SUCH MEASURES AS THE SWING CREDIT. THE UK DOUBTED WHETHER MAKING MINOR CHANGES IN BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH THE GDR WOULD HAVE ANY SERIOUS EFFECT. EYERS CONTINUED THAT HE HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO INFORM US THAT THE VISIT TO EAST BERLIN BY LORD GORONWY-ROBERTS, RETURNING THE VISIT TO THE UK BY GDR FOREIGN MINISTER FISCHER, WAS EXPECTED TO TAKE PLACE IN A FEW WEEKS. THERE WOULD BE NO FORMAL ANNOUNCEMENT UNTIL APRIL 5, AND EYERS ASKED THAT THE INFORMATION BE HELD IN CONFIDENCE UNTIL THEN.

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3. US REP REITERATED THAT, AS EYERS HAD CORRECTLY UNDERSTOOD, THE DEPARTMENT DOUBTED THE UTILITY OF A GENERAL FREEZE ON RELATIONS WITH THE GDR, PARTICULARLY BECAUSE OF THE DIFFICULTY OF MAINTAINING ALLIED SOLIDARITY. THE DEPARTMENT DID, HOWEVER, BELIEVE THAT THERE WAS UTILITY IN TAKING CERTAIN BILATERAL STEPS WITH THE GDR, INCLUDING THE POSTPONEMENT OF

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----011300Z 005512 /42

P R 011222Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7079
INFO USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

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VISITS BY SENIOR POLITICAL OFFICIALS.

4. FRENCH REP (BOISSIEU) COMMENTED ON THE POTENTIALLY SERIOUS NATURE OF THE PROBLEM CONFRONTING US. READING FROM HIS REPORT ON THE HIBBERT-DE LABOULAYE MEETING TO WHICH EYERS HAD REFERRED, BOISSIEU SAID HIBBERT HAD STATED AT LEAST SIX TIMES THAT IT WAS NOT UP TO THE THREE ALLIES TO PULL THE CHESTNUTS OUT OF THE FIRE FOR THE FRG. BOISSIEU SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE PROBLEM, WHICH WAS ONE OF COORDINATION AMONG THE THREE ALLIES AND THE FRG. IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR ANY COUNTRY, ESPECIALLY A EUROPEAN ONE, TO ADMIT THAT IT COULD FREEZE RELATIONS, PARTICULARLY ON TRADE MATTERS, WITH A COUNTRY AS IMPORTANT AS THE GDR, AND THIS DIFFICULTY WOULD BE COMPOUNDED WHEN OTHER PARTNERS -- I.E., THE FRG -- DID NOT FOLLOW THE SAME COURSE.

5. NEVERTHELESS, BOISSIEU CONTINUED, THE ALLIES MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THE ONLY POSSIBLE COUNTERMEASURES AVAILABLE TO US ARE DRASTIC. WE HAVE NO CHOICE
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BETWEEN DOING NOTHING AND TAKING ACTIONS WHICH WOULD PROVOKE A MAJOR CRISIS. IN ADDITION, WE MUST REALIZE THAT OUR INTERESTS ARE DIFFERENT FROM THOSE OF THE FRG AND THAT THE GERMANS, IN LIGHT OF DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS WITH THE GDR IN 1972, WOULD RESIST TAKING COUNTERMEASURES AGAINST THE GDR.

6. BOISSIEU SAID THAT IT WOULD NOT BE APPROPRIATE

FOR HIM TO COMMENT ON THE UK RESPONSE TO THE FRENCH SUGGESTION. HE WOULD ONLY SAY THAT IF GORONWY-ROBERTS GOES THROUGH WITH HIS VISIT TO EAST BERLIN, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR THE FRENCH EMBASSY HERE TO CONTINUE TO SAY THAT IT WOULD BE IMPROPER FOR DE GUIRINGAUD TO GO. BOISSIEU CONTINUED THAT THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE QUADRIPARTITE AGREEMENT THAT THE ALLIES HAVE HAD SERIOUS PROBLEMS WITH THE GDR. IF IN THE COURSE OF TWO OR THREE MONTHS TWO BRITISH MINISTERS AND ONE FRENCH MINISTER WERE TO VISIT EAST BERLIN, THIS WOULD NOT BE THE BEST POSSIBLE ANSWER THE ALLIES COULD GIVE THE GDR. (COMMENT: ADDRESSEES WILL RECALL THAT A JUNIOR MINISTER FROM THE UK MINISTRY OF TRADE VISITED EAST BERLIN IN JANUARY.)

7. COMMENT: LONDON'S REACTION TO THE FRENCH SOUNDINGS SEEMS ESSENTIALLY TO BOIL DOWN TO THE VIEW THAT THE ONLY EFFECTIVE WEAPONS AGAINST THE GDR ARE US POLITICAL LEVERAGE WITH THE SOVIETS AND FRG ECONOMIC LEVERAGE WITH THE GDR, AND THAT FOR THE UK, THEREFORE, BUSINESS MAY AS WELL GO ON AS USUAL. USE OF THE "ECONOMIC WEAPON" IS A PERENNIAL SUBJECT OF DEBATE THE FRG. LONDON NO DOUBT REALIZES THAT IT WAS THOROUGHLY REHASHED IN LAST FALL'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND AGAIN REJECTED BY THE FRG LEADERSHIP, ON GROUNDS THAT IT WOULD BE NOT ONLY INEFFECTIVE BUT ALSO HARMFUL -- ECONOMICALLY FOR THE WEST GERMANS AND IN HUMAN TERMS FOR THE EAST GERMANS WHOSE LOT THE FRG

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STRIVES TO IMPROVE.

8. WE SHARED BOISSIEU'S VIEW THAT THE GORONWY-ROBERTS VISIT WILL AT A MINIMUM SIGNAL TO THE EAST GERMANS AND THE SOVIETS THAT THERE IS ALLIED DISUNITY ON THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE RECENT GDR ACTIONS. IN THE LIGHT OF EYERS' PRESENTATION, HOWEVER, WE AGREE WITH EMBASSY BERLIN (REF D) THAT THE BRITISH ARE UNLIKELY TO CONSIDER POSTPONING THE VISIT, AND ONLY THE DEPARTMENT CAN JUDGE WHETHER IT IS WORTH TRYING TO PERSUADE THEM TO DO SO. GIVEN HIBBERT'S VIEW THAT IT IS UP TO THE FRG TO PULL ITS OWN CHESTNUTS OUT OF THE FIRE (A VIEW WHICH SEEMS TO IGNORE THE IMPORTANT ALLIED INTERESTS AT STAKE IN BERLIN), ANY US APPROACH TO THE BRITISH WOULD HAVE TO BE AT A HIGHER LEVEL.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, FOREIGN RELATIONS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, STATUS OF BERLIN
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 01-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BONN05777
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770112-0420
Format: TEL
From: BONN
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197704100/aaaadivt.tel
Line Count: 220
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 56eab39b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 77 STATE 67315, 77 BONN 5068, 77 PARIS 9087, 77 BERLIN 5594
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2662290
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ALLIED REACTIONS TO RECENT GDR ACTIONS AFFECTING BERLIN
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, WB, US, UK, FR, GE, GC, UR
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/56eab39b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009